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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, May 13, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MEAT PIES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Going back to beginnings and discussing originals, there is the original meat pie. If the history books I've read are correct, the cook who invented the pie lived way back in the early days in Merrie England. The date when the very first pie came out of an old English oven I can't give you. I don't think anyone knows it. But I shouldn't be a bit surprised if King Arthur's knights now and then feasted on pie around the Round Table. Anyway, I know for sure that the early pie was spelled with a "y" instead of an "i". And I know that the authentic or original p-y-e was a meat pie -- a beef or mutton pie or maybe a poultry pie. From the time when English children began singing about "four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie" up until the present day, pie proper in England has been made with meat. Cherry pie and pumpkin pie and custard pie and all the rest of the sweet pies are new-fangled variations in pie history.

Well, I'm telling you about pie beginnings just to show you what a fine background this special meat dish has. It is still a substantial main dish fit for a king or a knight or the likes of you and me. And I'm mentioning it just now because it's one of our good economy meat dishes. Of course, meat pies can be expensive, if you make them of nightingales' tongues or pheasants' breasts, or some rare delicacy. But you can make a very good pie out of the inexpensive meats or left-over tidbits, and in a pie a little meat can go a long way.

Somebody has said that a meat pie is just a stew with a lid on. That's a pretty good definition. Any good recipe for stew makes a good filling for meat pie. You can make your stew with or without vegetables. If you use vegetables, of course, your meat will go a little farther.

Here are the directions for meat pie worked out at the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D. C. They suggest making a stew of beef, veal or lamb. You can use beef or veal neck, plate, brisket, flank or shank -- all cheaper parts of the animal. Or you can use lamb breast, shoulder, neck or flank. For a family of five or six, you cut from one to two pounds of meat into fairly small pieces. Then you sprinkle the meat with salt, pepper and flour. Then you brown it in fat. That's to develop a nice rich meat flavor. Now add a sliced onion and water to cover. Put a lid on your kettle and cook slowly for an hour or an hour and a half. Now, if you want vegetables in your pie, add sliced turnip, celery, carrot or potato. Cook until both meat and vegetables are tender. If the mixture isn't thick enough, add a little flour mixed with cold water and cook a few minutes longer. Season to taste.

So much for the pie filling. Now pour this mixture into a shallow pan or baking dish and cover it with biscuit dough. You can cover with a sheet of dough or with dough cut in rounds. Or, if you want to make an old-fashioned shepherd's pie, cover the top with mashed potatoes. Set your pie in an oven until it is hot through and brown on top.

Canned meat and left-over cooked meat also will make a good pie. You combine the meat and any gravy you have on hand with tomatoes and other vegetables and season to taste. Among the seasonings that you can use to pep up your pie are thyme; celery tops, fresh or dried; curry; celery seed; parsley, onion and garlic.

You see how simple this fine old-time pie is after all. Just a good, brown, flavorful stew mixture with a crust of biscuit dough.

Some people prefer meat turnovers to meat pie. Here's another inexpensive recipe that should please the man of the family especially. It's a good way to use meat left-overs. Again I'll give you directions from the Bureau of Home Economics. For turnovers you use chopped cooked meat instead of raw meat cut in pieces. Season chopped cooked or canned meat with onion and celery or parsley. Moisten it slightly with gravy or broth or tomatoes -- whichever you have on hand. And add salt and pepper to taste. Now make a rich dough using a baking powder biscuit recipe but doubling the quantity of fat. Roll the dough out in thin rounds. On each round place some of the seasoned meat filling. Now fold the edges of the dough together to make turnovers. Bake in a hot oven -- about 425 degrees F.

Still another variety of meat pie is creamed meat or meat in gravy served in a patty shell. Here you use true pie-crust instead of biscuit dough.

Well, they say the British tars swear by their beefsteak-and-kidney pie, and their mutton pie. People in parts of this country cheer for chicken pie. I've met cooks who declare that no pie can beat a good veal pie. I'll leave you to choose your own favorite. But whichever you choose, it's a dressed-up stew just the same -- a stew with a lid of biscuit crust. And the principles of successful stew-making will make your pie a success.

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